



## What is Information Literacy?

Information literacy is an umbrella term. It encompasses skills and strategies, knowledge and attitudes: a range of things that, used together, enable us to read for information, to research, to learn effectively.

It may be helpful to think about information literacy as covering:

- *technical skills* involved in finding and organising information – to use key words, know how things are organised in the library, use the library catalogue, use an appropriate on-line search engine
- *thinking processes* that enable us to use information effectively – to ask good questions, plan an enquiry, select or reject information to take notes, judge whether information is biased/credible/out of date
- *use of information to solve problems* – to decide what information you need to answer a question, choose what is relevant, make sense of what you have found to form your own opinions or develop your understanding;
- *positive attitudes* to libraries and resources and the *confidence* to use them.

Teachers and heads recognise the elements of information literacy. They use terms such as study skills, library skills, problem-solving and independent inquiry. The umbrella of information literacy brings together this range of skills and abilities in a coherent package so that it is easier to address children's needs in a planned and systematic way.

There are several lists and frameworks that spell out in more detail what is covered by information literacy. These will be useful when you come to consider how and where to integrate information literacy into your teaching.

The School Library Association has produced a useful guide to information literacy skills for primary schools, called *Cultivating Curiosity*. You can find it listed with other SLA publications at [www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php](http://www.sla.org.uk/sla-guidelines.php)

### **Why bother with information literacy?**

1. The teachers we talked to want their pupils to be curious, confident, independent and flexible learners. This does not happen by accident or osmosis. You need to build opportunities into the curriculum for children to develop appropriate abilities and attitudes. Information literacy brings these together in one place. It is a useful tool for planning.
2. Study, work and leisure are all changing. We do not yet know everything that children will need in order to function effectively in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We do know that the ability to access and use information and the process of building knowledge will continue to be important. Information literacy is an essential help if we want to equip children to reach their potential in a new environment.
3. The DCSF stresses that the process of learning is important as well as the content. Information literacy encourages a focus on process; it

provides a basis for discussion and feedback on children's learning strategies.

Many schools try to offer pupil-centred teaching, using a problem-based learning approach. Some children cope with this well - others struggle. Developing children's information literacy makes it more likely that they will thrive in a problem-solving environment.